

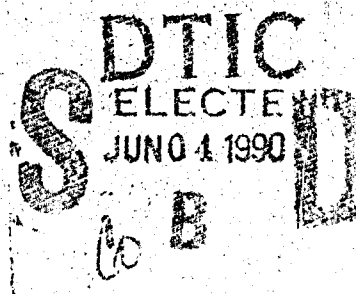
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A RAND NOTE

Glasnost About Building Socialism in Ethiopia:
Analysis of a Critical Soviet Article

Paul B. Henze

April 1990



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An article in the Soviet journal [Narody Azii i Afriki] (Peoples of Asia and Africa), No. 1, 1989, contains the strongest criticism seen to date of Ethiopia's Marxist-Leninist regime. Ostensibly the work of a graduate student, Galina Krylova, the article is said to be the work of a group of Soviet officials who have been pressing for basic changes in Soviet policy toward the Third World. The article condemns Ethiopia's revolutionary leaders for attempting to turn the country into a communist state without having or creating any of the prerequisites for sustainable socialist development. It simultaneously acknowledges that the Ethiopians have been the victims of unrealistic Soviet advice. It ridicules Ethiopia's Marxists for pretending to base their rule on an almost nonexistent industrial proletariat while brutalizing the peasantry and enforcing measures that have curtailed agricultural production and contributed to famine. The article is nevertheless noteworthy for failing to mention Soviet military aid and downplaying Soviet economic assistance. Though Gorbachevian in spirit and tone, the article makes no mention of Gorbachev. This Note includes a full translation of the article.

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N-3022-USDP

Glasnost About Building Socialism in Ethiopia: Analysis of a Critical Soviet Article

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**Prepared for the
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy**

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PREFACE

Although *glasnost* (openness) has stimulated widespread debate on domestic issues in the USSR, discussion of Third World countries' experience in "socialist transformation" has developed rather slowly. Obviously, the efforts of most Soviet Third World clients to put Marxism-Leninism into practice have plunged them into deep economic, social, and political crisis. The more dogmatically Third World Marxist-Leninist leaders have tried to implement Moscow's erstwhile advice, the deeper into trouble they have fallen.

Until recently, however, most Soviet area specialists had praised Third World leaders' efforts to "build socialism." The Soviets usually ascribed any shortcomings and failures to adverse developments in world commodity markets, intrigues of neocolonialists and imperialists, or reactionary political forces. Though conditions in Ethiopia have been a growing embarrassment for the Soviets since the great famine of 1984-1986 and GOSPLAN advisers in Addis Ababa developed far-reaching recommendations for economic reform in mid-1985, Soviet Africa specialists have hesitated to criticize.¹

The recent appearance of an unusually comprehensive, extremely critical evaluation of the entire experience of the Ethiopian "national-democratic revolution" in the authoritative journal *Narody Azii i Afriki* (Peoples of Asia and Africa) appears to herald a new era of frankness.² The article has serious implications not only for Ethiopia, but for other Soviet Third World client states, and even for the Soviet Union itself.

The journal identifies Galina Krylova, the author of the article, as a doctoral candidate in the Institute of African Studies. No one of this name is known to have published earlier studies on Ethiopia, Africa, or the Third World. According to a Soviet diplomat in Africa, however, Galina Krylova is the pseudonym of four or five senior Soviet officials who penned the article. The diplomat noted also that many senior officials, as well

¹For an analysis and translation of the GOSPLAN recommendations, see Paul B. Henze, *Ethiopia, Crisis of a Marxist Economy: Analysis and Text of a Soviet Report*, The RAND Corporation, R-3677-USDP, April 1989. The GOSPLAN report circulated widely among both Ethiopians and foreigners in Addis Ababa in the months following its transmittal to Ethiopian planners, but given Soviet bureaucratic restrictions, even if copies went to Moscow, they may not have been made available to scholars concerned with Ethiopia, including those in the Academy of Sciences Institute of African Studies.

²See G. A. Krylova, "Natsional'no-demokraticheskaya revolyutsiya v svete novogo politicheskogo myshleniya (na primere Efiopii)" (National-Democratic Revolution in the Light of New Political Thinking [The Example of Ethiopia]), *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 1, 1989, pp. 42-53.

as members of the new Congress of People's Deputies, have become increasingly dissatisfied with Soviet policy in countries, such as Ethiopia, to which Soviet resources are being exported "every time some little would-be communist cries for more."

We may thus conclude that this article is exactly what it appears to be: an internal position paper advocating a serious change in Soviet policy toward Ethiopia. The article makes a formidable case against the Marxist-Leninist regime of President Mengistu Haile Mariam.

This Note analyzes and comments on the "Krylova" article, a complete translation of which appears in the appendix. The work was performed in the framework of the International Economic Policy Program's project on the "Study of the Economy of Revolutionary Ethiopia: Comparative Economic Performance and the Burden of Military Expenditures," under the auspices of the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense.



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SUMMARY

An extremely critical evaluation of the efforts of the regime of Ethiopian strongman Mengistu Haile Mariam to build socialism appeared in the authoritative Soviet journal *Narody Azii i Afriki* (Peoples of Asia and Africa), No. 1, 1989, published under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Ostensibly written by Galina Krylova, a hitherto unknown graduate student, the article has been described by a Soviet diplomat as actually the product of several senior Soviet officials who are disgusted with the waste of resources Soviet Third World adventurism has entailed and who advocate a fundamental change in policy. Possibly the sharpest and most comprehensive condemnation of a Third World Marxist-Leninist client regime yet to appear in the USSR, the article represents a significant intensification of the application of *glasnost* to this sensitive and embarrassing area of Soviet foreign policy.

The article does not confine its harsh judgments to the Ethiopian revolutionaries alone. It attributes their excesses at least in part to bad Soviet advice and flaws in the theories which the Soviet Union has been applying to Third World political and economic development. The article applies not only to Ethiopia, but to Third World Marxist-Leninist states in general. All Third World Marxist-Leninist leaders are seen as prone to the same mistakes.

Ethiopia's Marxists are accused of (1) applying dogma with too much zeal and in an oversimplified manner, (2) pretending to base their rule on an industrial proletariat that hardly exists, and (3) abusing the country's peasantry, rushing them toward collectivization against their own temperament, and failing to create the prerequisites for successful socialist agriculture. The article's authors are not entirely consistent in this and other apparent prescriptions, for they appear in fact to doubt the validity of collectivization even of Soviet agriculture.

The authors accuse Ethiopian revolutionaries of not understanding the country's history and ethnic and religious makeup. Because of this, they say, the Ethiopian Marxists have alienated much of the population and driven people into armed rebellion. By attempting to deal with insurgency by military means alone, in their view, the regime has entangled itself deeper and deeper in costly campaigns that leave neither money nor energy for constructive purposes.

The authors also leave out a great deal. They make no mention of the massive military aid the Soviet Union has given Mengistu. They criticize the state sector of industry as unprofitable, but fail to identify the two largest state projects, which they specifically criticize, as Soviet-designed and financed. *Glasnost* appears, therefore, to have its limits: Discussion of Soviet military and economic aid for failing Third World regimes was apparently still felt to be out of bounds at the time this article was written. The massive and inhumane resettlement program in Ethiopia which the Soviets initially supported is likewise never mentioned.

The article betrays no affection for Mengistu. He is accused of governing in too authoritarian a manner and of not changing his habits from the days of the military government (Derg), even after the country became a people's republic. He and his supporters are condemned for trying to apply Marxism-Leninism by rote and for citing Stalin in their ideological formulations. The recent administrative reorganization of the country is questioned as likely to exacerbate the country's ethnic problems.

Though Gorbachev is never mentioned, the style of argumentation of the article parallels his and the conclusions represent his current position. The authors claim that with some adjustments and more intelligent application, Marxism-Leninism can provide a guide for successful development of Third World societies. Nevertheless, they fail to specify how or to cite any examples in which the Soviet approach or Soviet support in the Third World has brought success.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Issue No. 1, 1989, of the principal Soviet Third World journal, *Narody Azii i Afriki* (Peoples of Asia and Africa), published under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, contains by far the most comprehensive Soviet condemnation that has yet appeared of the policies and performance of the Ethiopian Marxist-Leninist regime of President Mengistu Haile Mariam and his ruling clique.¹ The placement of the article under the heading of "Socialist Orientation: Reality and Theory," suggests a broader context than Ethiopia alone: It may be read as applicable also to Africa, to the developing world as a whole, and even, to a considerable degree, to the USSR itself.

Though Gorbachev's name is never mentioned, the article is distinctly Gorbachevian in spirit, with sweeping admissions of past errors and brutally frank language, with unequivocal denunciations of Stalin and of bureaucrats who still operate in his "command-administrative" tradition, but with meticulous adherence to the pretense that Marxism-Leninism remains a valid and creative philosophy and Soviet-style socialism an ultimate goal worth pursuing. This pretense is maintained more by declaration and implication, however, than by straightforward argumentation, and the negative content of the article is far stronger than the relatively tentative positive prescriptions it contains.

The authors cite an odd mixture of sources and include writings of several U.S. and British Ethiopianists in references, but show little knowledge of recent Western writing on the country. They cite no Soviet scholars or researchers specializing in Ethiopia, an extremely conservative group who have regularly and dependably praised "socialist transformations" in Ethiopia and only partially and delicately, even in recent years, criticized Ethiopian revolutionary practices and failures.

Soviets attending the Tenth International Ethiopian Studies Conference (IESC), Paris, August 1988, attacked Western scholars for denigrating Ethiopia's economic performance.² They also criticized as inappropriate a presentation on "Soviet Policy toward Ethiopia since Gorbachev" by Prof. Richard Remnek of the University of California, arguing that analysis

¹See G. A. Krylova, "Natsional'no-demokraticheskaya revolyutsiya v svete novogo politicheskogo myshleniya (na primere Efiopii)" (National-Democratic Revolution in the Light of New Political Thinking [The Example of Ethiopia]), *Narody Azii i Afriki*, No. 1, 1989, pp. 42-53.

²My paper was among those criticized; it was subsequently published as *Ethiopia's Economic Prospects for the 1990s*, The RAND Corporation, N-2857-USDP, February 1989.

of Soviet-Ethiopian relations was not a legitimate topic of concern for Western researchers.³ I find no evidence that the authors feel embarrassed by past praise of Mengistu's policies or by defenses of Soviet policy toward Ethiopia since the 1974 revolution.

The authors (assuming that "Krylova" is, in fact, the pseudonym of several senior Soviet officials) accuse Ethiopia's Marxist revolutionaries of applying Marxism with excessive zeal in oversimplified form, of failing to understand the nature of their own society, especially its peasantry, of exacerbating ethnic problems and stubbornly persisting in attempting to deal with separatism by military means. The revolutionaries are denounced for persisting in efforts to collectivize agriculture in the face of increasing peasant resistance, falling production, and lack of resources to invest in cooperatives. They are berated for too hurried and extensive nationalization of industry and for pretending that they are basing their Marxist-Leninist party on workers when the country's industrial proletariat is so weak in numbers that it carries no weight in society.

The authors ridicule Ethiopian planners for concocting a ten-year economic development plan that requires 44.5 percent of its investment to come from the West. They condemn the Mengistu government's territorial-administrative reorganization as likely to exacerbate, rather than contribute to, the settlement of the country's ethnic strains.⁴ They accuse the ruling group of ignoring the country's traditions and distancing itself from the people, while resorting to force to impose its programs on an increasingly unenthusiastic and disillusioned population. They rebuke Mengistu for governing as president just as he did as Chairman of the Derg (Provisional Military Administrative Council), basing his power not on "written law" but on "political practice."

The flavor of the article is perhaps best conveyed by excerpting several of its most significant passages:

³At the same conference, a veteran Soviet Ethiopianist, Egveni Sherr, in a laudatory paper, "Basic Principles of the Ethiopian Revolution," cited the "sound comment" of an Ethiopian regime apologist, Tefesse Worq Wondimu: "While we were engaged in combating a national disaster, imperialism contrived this new propaganda trick: hunger in Ethiopia has now been attributed to our socialist reforms and our measures in resettling people have been described as a carbon copy of collectivization policy." Cited in *Za mir, sotrudnichestvo i sotsial'ny progress* (For Peace, Cooperation, and Social Progress)—materials of the Second Soviet-African Conference on Political Science, 24-26 June 1986, Moscow, 1988, p. 130. The views expressed in the current article correspond to those which Soviet Africa specialists have heretofore condemned as inventions of "imperialism."

⁴These comments parallel my own observations based on visits to several areas in the process of administrative reorganization reported in *Ethiopia in Early 1989: Deepening Crisis*, The RAND Corporation, P-7574, November 1989.

Experience shows that one cannot take Marxism-Leninism—a doctrine that was basically formed in the second half of the last and the beginning of the present century in the countries of Europe—and apply it directly in newly liberated countries. (p. 18)

[An American] eyewitness of revolutionary events...quite explicitly characterized the agrarian reforms of the military government [Derg] as an effort of the new regime to establish absolute political control of the peasantry. In our view he correctly believed that to solve its agrarian problems, the country should develop small-scale farms. (p. 20)

The propositions of Marxism-Leninism were laid out [by Ethiopian revolutionaries] in popularized, oversimplified form. Many articles in the Ethiopian sociopolitical journal *Meskerem* consisted of quoted and expanded citations of V. I. Lenin with extremely schematic commentary.... Even in the 1980s, references to the works of I. V. Stalin and his *Short History* were no rarity. (p. 22)

In naming their party [the Workers' Party of Ethiopia], Ethiopian revolutionaries believed that its base would consist of industrial workers. They could not avoid realizing...that the industrial proletariat in the country...totaled in all 105,000 people and that it was extremely weakly organized.... Assertions about the leading role of the Ethiopian working class in the revolutionary struggle remained purely speculative. (pp. 23-24)

A territorial-administrative reorganization has been carried out; instead of the present 14 provinces, 30 have been formed. However, ignoring the nationality factor in carrying out the reforms has led to a situation where the ethnic groups inhabiting the country have become even more divided. (pp. 27-28)

In spite of accomplishments postulated in party documents, the Ethiopian leadership still has not succeeded even in approaching a solution of the problems of economic development, national integration, raising the living standards of the masses, and their genuine inclusion in the political process. (p. 28)

The country is undergoing an economic crisis.... [R]eliance on political and administrative actions rather than on economic production incentives and material self-interest...led to the disruption of normal farming activity of millions of peasants and to the constant threat of famine. (p. 28)

Economic and social crisis, the danger that millions of people will perish from hunger, the formation of a political system in which the population is in practice removed from the adoption of decisions, and prolonged unsuccessful war against separatism create the ground for opposition activity. (p. 29)

[T]he Soviet model of building socialism cannot be acknowledged as "standard" not only because it took shape...in the framework of the antisocialist and criminal activities of I. V. Stalin,...[but because] it did enormous damage to society and involved irreplaceable human sacrifices. (p. 32)

Likewise, our experience with collectivization of agriculture as a result of which the peasantry was ruined and the problem of production was sharply exacerbated—millions of people died of hunger and our country was transformed from an exporter into a major importer of food—is in no way appropriate in...African countries (and it has nothing to do with social progress in general). (p. 32)

II. UNMENTIONABLE SUBJECT: SOVIET AID

The article fails to consider key features of the Soviet-Ethiopian relationship. For example, the authors make no mention of the more than \$11 billion in military aid that the Soviet Union has supplied to Mengistu since 1977 and the continued presence in Ethiopia of a large Soviet advisory group, including *inter alia* military officers engaged in planning and directing Ethiopian Army and Air Force operations against separatists and dissidents. Nor do they claim credit on behalf of the Soviet Union for the massive airlift and sealift of weapons and troops that rescued Mengistu from Somali attack in 1977-1978 and enabled him to consolidate his hold on power. Finally, they do not discuss the Cubans in Ethiopia. Are these taboo subjects?

The article repeatedly condemns Mengistu's persistence in attempting to suppress separatists and dissidents by arms, but does not acknowledge that these operations would have come to a halt long ago if the Soviets had not continued massive shipments of weapons through 1989, even though many of them have fallen into the hands of insurgents. Thus the Soviets have, in effect, been fueling ethnic conflict from both sides. Moreover, we have no evidence that the Soviets have stopped shipping arms to Mengistu.

The article attributes the misguided attempts of Third World states to emulate Soviet industrialization at least in part to the fact that

many Soviet political officials and academics not only did not object but encouraged "grandiose plans" in connection with the industrialization of Ghana...and several other countries. (p. 32)

It fails to deal with specifics in respect to Ethiopia, however, where the same process undoubtedly occurred.

The authors ignore both the substantial numbers of advisers and technicians that the Soviet and East European governments have maintained in Ethiopia, and the GOSPLAN contingent in the Ethiopian Central Planning Organization. They betray no awareness of the GOSPLAN report, released in September 1985, condemning the economic performance of Mengistu's regime and recommending far-reaching economic policy adjustments, though it provides detailed background supporting many of the arguments made.

Soviet sympathy and proxy support, prior to 1977, for the Eritrean insurgency is, not surprisingly, also ignored. So is the Soviet role in the military buildup of Somalia, which enabled Siad Barre to attack Ethiopia in 1977. The acute internal factionalism that shook the Derg both before and after this watershed development and resulted in consolidation of Mengistu's power is alluded to only obliquely with a quotation from American authors David and Marina Ottaway. Discussing the confused situation that prevailed during the period when the Derg first attempted to organize a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party, the Ottaways characterized the party as "a veritable battleground for contending civilian and military factions." (p. 23)

The Soviets were hardly innocent bystanders during the revolutionary commotion. The Soviet ambassador was first to congratulate Mengistu when he emerged victorious from the spectacular Derg shoot-out in the first week of February 1977. Mengistu and his friends could be forgiven for finding some of the article's criticisms unfair, for over and over again the Soviets, both in Ethiopia and in Moscow, provided detailed advice and assistance that helped him consolidate his hold on the country, push the peasantry toward collectivization, restrict private enterprise, build a "workers' party," and proclaim a "people's republic."¹

Mengistu's Soviet mentors repeatedly praised him for these "accomplishments." Now this article calls them all hollow and counterproductive, often using phraseology and formulations practically identical to those that have been employed by Ethiopian exile critics and Western journalists and scholars for many years.

The authors appear to share the characteristic Soviet reticence about discussing development assistance. They note that "High-prestige projects, such as the tractor assembly plant in Nazreth and the hydroelectric station in Melka Wakena, are not having the expected economic effect" (p. 28), but they do not mention that these were both built with Soviet aid. The two are, in fact, among the very few Soviet economic aid projects undertaken in Ethiopia and in the past have often been held up by both Moscow and Mengistu as examples of Soviet generosity toward the Ethiopian regime. Heavy, old-fashioned tractors from the Nazreth plant have performed poorly and Melka Wakena is, in fact, far from finished. Ethiopian engineers are critical of the performance of Soviet and Czechoslovak technicians supervising its construction.²

¹Not without friction, of course, as in the Negede Gobezie affair in summer 1978 and in the long drawn-out process, taking almost five years, by which the Committee for Organizing the Workers Party of Ethiopia (COPWE) was finally transformed into a party. See Paul B. Henze, *Russians and the Horn, Opportunism and the Long View*, European American Institute for Security Research, Marina del Rey, Calif., 1983, pp. 45-46; and Henze, "Communism and Ethiopia," *Problems of Communism*, May-June 1981.

²These comments are based on personal observation and conversations during my

The fact that the authors avoid identifying Nazreth and Melka Wakena as Soviet-supported projects reinforces the impression that Soviet economic assistance to socialist client states remains a largely taboo subject, even in this era of *glasnost*. They show no reticence about discussing Western aid, Ethiopia's dependence on it, and the desirability of creating conditions that will attract Western donors, investors, and international aid organizations.

visit to Melka Wakena in March 1989. A larger and technologically more challenging high dam was built by Italian engineers at Pawe in a fraction of the time the Soviets have been working on Melka Wakena.

III. AGRICULTURAL FIASCO

Although the article repeatedly condemns Mengistu's massive villagization campaign as coercive and describes its negative effect on peasant initiative and productivity, it does not mention the far more coercive resettlement effort that moved hundreds of thousands of famine-stricken and arbitrarily selected peasants into inhospitable lowland areas in late 1984 and 1985. The USSR initially approved this undertaking, supplied both trucks and aircraft for transporting the settlers, and endorsed Mengistu's goal of moving 1.5 million people within a two-year period. The Soviet media praised resettlement at the time, and Soviet Ethiopian specialists cited it as an example of commendable Marxist-Leninist creativity. At the Ninth IESC in Moscow, August 1986, Soviet Ethiopianists extolled the resettlement, comparing it to the Soviet Virgin Lands experience of the 1950s.¹

By 1986, however, the program had been suspended (after some 600,000 persons had been moved) because of the harsh criticism of international agencies and Western donors and the sheer inability of Mengistu's government to supply the most elementary needs of the settlers, who were dying at an alarming rate. It has never been resumed. The largest of the resettlement areas, Pawe in Gojjam, where resettlers initially suffered over 30 percent mortality, has been kept viable only because of a massive Italian aid program.²

Though the article ignores the resettlement fiasco, its authors agree with many Ethiopian agricultural economists and most Western scholars and journalists in characterizing Mengistu's overall agricultural policies as his most serious economic failure. According to the authors, there was

widespread coercion of the peasants in the process of establishing consolidated farms. Obviously, the experience of similar transformations in several other

¹The "resettlement of many thousands of populace from the arid northern areas to the fertile ones in South West is a very important measure to establish good-neighborly interethnic relations. This resettlement radically differs from the practices of the imperial regime when new settlers were allotted land at the expense of local tribes of different ethnic origin and language." M. V. Rait and V. S. Yagya, "Some Aspects of Nation Formation in Socialist Ethiopia," *Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Academy of Sciences, Institute of African Studies, Moscow, 1988, Vol. 3, p. 214; see also numerous favorable references in G. L. Galperin, "Some Notes on Population Migrations in Ethiopia before and in the Course of the Revolution," in *Proceedings*, Vol. 1, pp. 176-185.

²For a brief description of Pawe see Paul B. Henze, *Ethiopia in Early 1989: Deepening Crisis*, The RAND Corporation, P-7574, November 1989, pp. 30-34.

African countries was insufficiently analyzed.... Not only the degree of readiness of the peasants for cooperative production, but the ability of the state to materially support cooperative production was obviously exaggerated. The peasants preferred their own traditional methods of farming and were skeptical about collective forms of labor.... The announced principle of voluntary entry into a cooperative was negated by the regulation [stating] that in case of leaving or being expelled from a cooperative, land, agricultural implements, and entry fees would not be returned to the peasant, while compensation would be paid only if it suited the needs of the cooperative. (p. 26)

But not only the zealous Ethiopian revolutionaries were at fault: They merely accepted uncritically

dogmatic recommendations contained in many [Soviet] research studies and documents of the 1970s, when any forms of socialization in agriculture, no matter what their economic appropriateness, were being equated with socialist transformations and regarded as historically progressive. (pp. 25-26)

IV. TERMINAL ECONOMIC CRISIS

The authors of the article see Mengistu's regime as being in a condition approaching terminal crisis. Agricultural stagnation creates a chronic threat of famine. Nationalized industry is stagnant and unprofitable. Worse still,

more than 50 percent of the state budget goes for military purposes.¹ What kind of economy could support such enormous expenditures over an extended period?... The proclamation of the Ethiopian government of May 1988, in the fourteenth year of the revolution, of general mobilization in the absence of aggression from abroad testifies to the serious crisis which the country is experiencing and to the fact that the revolutionary leadership has not succeeded in solving its first-priority problems. (p. 29)

Marx is quoted to underscore the fundamental nature of the crisis:

The revolutionaries wake up and find that the revolution that they carried out in no way resembles the one that they wanted to carry out. They have a choice—either to follow their declared course, relying on force, or to recognize the contradictions that have arisen and correct this course.² (pp. 29-30)

The condemnation of party workers for the very excesses that they have been driven to commit is a standard technique that goes back to Stalin. Here, however, we finally find a straightforward admission that Soviet advice helped to create the deplorable situation:

In conditions of backward African countries, the Soviet experience in industrialization should have been applied with great caution.... Of course, at the time it occurred, many Soviet political officials and academics not only did not object but encouraged "grandiose plans" in connection with the industrialization of, for example, Ghana under K. Nkrumah and several other countries. (p. 32)

We must also remember that the development of friendly relations with the USSR prompted Ethiopian leaders not only to accept the idea of scientific socialism but also to attempt to reproduce our path without reckoning with all its costs. (p. 22)

¹The authors cite *Newsweek*, No. 39, 1984, p. 23, as the source of the 50 percent figure.

²K. Marx and F. Engels, *Works*, Vol. 36, p. 263.

The authors nevertheless seem to doubt the ability of Mengistu and his clique to "recognize the contradictions that have arisen," as Marx counseled, and to follow the Soviets into *perestroika* (restructuring), though they do not use this term:

Of course, convinced of their political correctness and trying to retain power for themselves, the Ethiopian revolutionaries have great possibilities for asserting their will, though this entails significant human sacrifices.... The political situation cannot develop successfully in isolation from the economic situation.... [I]t is impossible to attain the goals of socioeconomic development by applying the old conceptual approach.... [T]he solution of many problems, including the nationality issue, lies in the internal development of the country's economy.... But correcting the socioeconomic and ideological-political development of the state from above (and possibly also from below) is unavoidable. There is already some evidence of it: limited agricultural reforms to increase food production,... measures to stimulate trade announced in December 1986,... and the interest shown in reforms in the Chinese People's Republic when Mengistu Haile Mariam visited that country in June 1988.³ (p. 30)

The article betrays a certain enthusiasm for the reforms of the Chinese and concludes on a note of mild hope by recommending that Ethiopian revolutionaries attempt to develop socialism with a specifically *Ethiopian character*:

One cannot but recall in this connection that the Chinese communists, in carrying out the reforms directed at the liquidation of bureaucratic state socialism—reforms that are attracting enormous interest—call the kind of society they are building "socialism with a specifically Chinese character." (p. 31)

Even if the authors attach some hope to the "limited agricultural reforms to increase food production [and] measures to stimulate trade announced in December 1987," noted above, they can cite few actions of the Ethiopian regime to justify a conclusion that major reform has begun.

³Mengistu reportedly went to China to seek arms above the quantities the USSR was still willing to deliver. There is little evidence that he either displayed much interest in or was impressed by Chinese economic reforms; he did not attempt to apply any of them in Ethiopia.

V. SOVIET AUTHORS' RECOMMENDATIONS

In the final two pages the authors of the article attempt to develop more extensive positive recommendations for dealing with the depressing situation that they have described in Ethiopia and alluded to in other African countries, such as Angola and Mozambique. Like many others who have spoken up as *glasnost* has spread, the writers seem to feel obligated to prescribe positive measures that could help to alleviate the damage that has been done. They suggest, for example:

- Taking into account the "entire complexity of socio-cultural relations, including ethnic peculiarities and religious-cultural traditions" (p. 30)
- Democratization of society and social consciousness by "implementing common national and common democratic reforms" (p. 31)
- Rejection of the Soviet model of building socialism (p. 32)
- Permitting capitalist and anticapitalist tendencies to exist simultaneously—i.e., "a protracted stage of all-out development of state-controlled and state-regulated trade and monetary relationships." (p. 32)

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Given the deterioration of the economy, as well as the increasingly critical military situation that has developed in Ethiopia, the article's prescriptions sound rather pathetic. Is it not too late to turn back and try to undo what has been done? Here, perhaps, these men may be reflecting on the larger dilemmas of socialism in the world at large, and not in the least in the USSR itself. They would "permit capitalism to develop to a certain stage but not permit it to become a framework that determines the nature of the system." (p. 32) Here we see a direct reflection of the approach Gorbachev is taking in the USSR. In fact, all of the article's recommendations, stripped of references to Africa and the backwardness of the Third World, are applicable to the USSR.

Though the article may well have been written several months before its publication, its authors must already have been agitated by the crisis Gorbachev's reforms have generated in their own society. It can now be seen, after the events of 1989, that the repeated stress on the need to deal with ethnic tensions and religious considerations as a prerequisite for setting matters right in a degenerated economy applies as much to the USSR as to Ethiopia.

The rapid polarization of ethnic issues and the linkage between nationality tensions and issues of environment and development (in Central Asia) and the interrelationship between economic problems and other issues (in the Baltics and the Caucasus) confront the Soviet Union with problems at least as profound as those which Mengistu's increasingly shaky "people's republic" faces. The authors admit that "the problems of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and the other Central Asian republics compel us to reflect on the costs to a society of its passage through certain stages of its development and to evaluate soberly and critically what has been accomplished." (p. 15)

This article is barren of any positive statements about the contributions of the USSR or Marxism-Leninism to Ethiopia or any other Soviet clients in the Third World. Its authors have been unable to make a case that either the USSR or its political philosophy have much to offer the Third World; the clear implication of their criticisms is that Ethiopia is but one example of the misapplication of the Soviet model. They cannot cite an example in which a Marxist-Leninist takeover has not "led to the establishment of a regime of authoritarian power, to excessive state control of social life, and consolidation of command-bureaucratic methods of leadership." (p. 31)

Indeed, the systemic crisis appears more complex and has vastly more serious implications for the USSR than for the Third World.¹ If a successful coup d'etat were to sweep Mengistu and his clique from power tomorrow, Ethiopia would no doubt experience some confusion and perhaps turmoil, but the "socialist" system that he has tried to build would crumble. He has not yet had time to create a party, government, or military bureaucracy whose vested interests depend on the maintenance of the system. The Ethiopian military are, in fact, as the coup attempt of May 1989 demonstrates, a major threat to Mengistu's hold on power. No other identifiable elements in Ethiopian society would want to preserve the "socialist" system that he has tried to create. The same cannot yet be said of the USSR.

Like so many of those in the Soviet Union who have taken advantage of the opportunities for self-expression that *glasnost* has offered during the past five years, the authors of this article, intentionally or otherwise, open up a Pandora's box. They want to believe that Soviet-sponsored "socialism" can still be refurbished to serve as a basis for political and economic systems in the developing world. They write as if Marxism-Leninism still has the creative potential to serve as a political philosophy for Africa.

But why retain an ideology that has inflicted such heavy social costs, led to economic stagnation and decline, and distorted political processes and priorities? Almost nothing that is positive, the article demonstrates, has been accomplished in the course of the Ethiopian "socialist" experience. The authors are even more negative in their evaluation of this experience than most Western commentators, heretofore, have been.

Ethiopia, along with Angola and Mozambique, may be extreme cases. But everywhere where there has been an attempt to apply Marxism-Leninism in Africa, it has exacerbated ethnic and social tensions, stifled economic growth, led to regimentation of societies, caused severe human suffering, exacted heavy military costs, and done economic, political, and physical damage that will require decades to repair.

The immediate task in Ethiopia is to reverse the process of deterioration and create conditions for recovery. The authors of this article recognize this, but perhaps cannot risk trying to look beyond the immediate critical situation. They display little understanding of the mentality of people who have endured this experience. Their predicament in its narrower context does not, however, differ radically from that of Gorbachev in attempting to reform and restructure the entire Soviet Union.

¹See Peter Reddaway, "Is the Soviet Union on the Road to Anarchy?" *Washington Post*, August 20, 1989; and also Peter Reddaway, "The Threat to Gorbachev," *New York Review of Books*, August 17, 1989.

Appendix

TEXT OF SOVIET ARTICLE CRITICIZING ETHIOPIA

A translation by Paul Henze of G. A. Krylova, "National-Democratic Revolution in the Light of New Political Thinking (The Example of Ethiopia)," appearing under the heading "Socialist Orientation: Reality and Theory" in *Narody Azii i Afriki* (Peoples of Asia and Africa), No. 1, 1989, pp. 42-53, follows.* (The article begins with an introductory paragraph, probably by the editors, set off from the text.)

The Soviet model, long regarded as the standard, has had an enormous influence not only on socialist countries but also on many states that have chosen the noncapitalist path of development. In practice, however, efforts to reproduce our model in conditions of Afro-Asian countries sometimes lead to the most grievous consequences. The Vietnamese communists frankly acknowledged this at the VIth Congress of the CPV [Communist Party of Vietnam] in December 1986. Our numerous press publications concerning the problems of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and the other Central Asian republics compel us to reflect on the costs to a society of its passage through certain stages of its development and to evaluate soberly and critically what has been accomplished.

The Ethiopian revolution represents a classic variant of the national-democratic revolution in the field of the national liberation movement. What are the bases for such an assertion?

In the first place, it occurred as a sharply defined social revolution. In its course, the monarchical regime was overthrown, feudal relationships were liquidated, and power passed into the hands of revolutionary-democratic forces in the form of the military, who represented primarily the urban middle strata, but also the peasant masses.

In the second place, the Ethiopian revolution immediately took on a truly popular character. In contrast to many other national-democratic revolutions, the Ethiopian revolution was not a "revolution from above," but a "revolution from below." The radically inclined intelligentsia, the army, the urban lower classes, and the peasantry rose against the feudal-monarchical regime. Ethiopia was unique among African countries in that, in the framework of the feudal society, social and class relations had reached a high level of development and political forces were particularly polarized. Because of the strong social base, the revolution took on a stable character.

*The RAND Corporation is grateful to the editor of *Narody Azii i Afriki* for permission to reproduce this translation.

Third, a sufficiently high level of political maturity characterized the leadership of the Ethiopian revolution. Though in the initial period the military men who led the revolution lacked certain sociopolitical orientation, they realized in the course of the revolutionary process, as a result of many factors, that it would be impossible to retain the old political and socioeconomic structure. One might think that they would not have had sufficient political experience and skill to conduct a complex political struggle aimed at discrediting the monarch in the eyes of the masses and isolating him—[the monarch] who had traditionally exercised enormous influence, especially among the peasantry. Nevertheless, they accomplished this, and in the shortest possible period.

Fourth, exceptional dynamism set the Ethiopian revolution apart: literally in very few months, a realignment of forces took place several times in the camp of the revolution. This is a characteristic of a genuine revolution—let us recall the words of F[riedrich] Engels: “It is the fate of all revolutions that the unification of different classes, which to a certain degree is always a prerequisite for a revolution, cannot last for long. No sooner is victory over the common enemy achieved than the victors fall out among themselves, forming various camps, and take up arms against each other.”¹ This, of course, was the consequence of the sharp social and class contradictions that had accumulated in Ethiopian society for years and which had become so sharply apparent during the revolution, of the unwillingness to compromise, and of the ruthlessness of the revolutionaries not only toward ideological opponents but also toward those who were essentially with them on the same side of the barricades. Of course, it is impossible not to take into account the rivalries of the leaders, especially in extreme situations. In light of the absence of a tradition of political democracy and backwardness of the political culture as such, this struggle at times assumed the most brutal forms.

The study of the development of the national-democratic revolution in Ethiopia is very important for answering the question of the fate of such revolutions in principle. Can a national-democratic revolution in a backward country develop into a socialist revolution? Or, at the present stage of worldwide development and with the current correlation of forces between the two social systems, and despite all its radicalism and the Marxist banners under which it often rages, will it be able to play the role only of an accelerator of transformations of a bourgeois-democratic character? Let us recall the beginning of the national-democratic revolutions in Burma, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and many other countries—they too generated unrealized hopes for the rapid creation of prerequisites for socialist-oriented development.

¹K. Marx and F. Engels, *Sochineniya* (Works), Vol. 8, p. 38.

It is possible, of course, to raise the objection that in such countries as Egypt and Iraq powerful capitalist-oriented social forces arose during the course of the development of the national-democratic revolution and that these forces decided the direction of social progress. Besides, the leadership of the revolution did not develop the necessary coherence in the struggle for the socialist option and did not rely on the broad masses of the workers. In Ethiopia, in contrast, the procapitalist forces were weak, while the leaders of the revolution early on declared their adherence to the ideas of scientific socialism. However, one must remember that the possibilities of a particular revolution depend not only on subjective but also on objective factors, not only on internal but also on external preconditions. In the final analysis, the type of revolution depends on the level of the structural maturity [*uroven' formatsionnoi zrelosti*] of a particular society.

After countries of "first-generation" socialist orientation failed to demonstrate genuine progress toward the radical transformation of society, many researchers calculated that revolutionary Ethiopia, thanks to the political maturity of the leadership and the social activeness of the masses, would be able to become a genuine example of progressive social development for African states. However, this enthusiasm quickly evaporated, and many of yesterday's supporters of the Ethiopian revolution have begun to underscore the increase in its negative tendencies.

To explain this, the difficulties characteristic of newly liberated countries in general, and of socialist-oriented countries in particular, are usually cited: The process of reorientation from capitalist to noncapitalist economic management is inherently complex; the pressure of world capitalism, with which links are maintained, is great; local reactionaries display strong resistance to the revolution; insufficient cadres have been trained; climatic factors have proved unfavorable, etc. All this is true. It is obvious also that progress for the least developed states is practically unattainable without serious external assistance. But the possibilities of the socialist countries in this respect are limited, and even countries on the noncapitalist path of development are oriented basically toward aid from the West. Ethiopia covers more than 80 percent of its requirements for external financial and material resources needed for its economic development from developed capitalist countries and international financial organizations.² At the same time, it requires hundreds of thousands of tons of grain in grant aid to keep millions of people from dying of hunger when regular drought occurs—we too, as is known, buy grain from capitalist countries. Such a

²*Sovremennaya Efiopiya. Spravochnik* (Contemporary Ethiopia. Handbook), Moscow, 1988, p. 112.

situation hardly makes possible socialist-oriented development, for the Western states understandably do not want to assist in the construction of socialism in any backward country.

But the problem goes beyond this. The roots of failure lie, as we suggest, in the absence of clear conceptions of possible courses and methods of reform. Mainly, a new concept of the transition of backward countries to socialism is needed—one that takes into account the actual contradictions and the unevenness of political and economic development. Experience shows that one cannot take Marxism-Leninism—a doctrine that was basically formed in the second half of the last and beginning of the present century in the countries of Europe—and apply it directly in newly liberated countries, taking into account their specific national circumstances. A creative approach to scientific socialism is needed, a refraction of this doctrine through the prism of concrete socioeconomic and socio-historical analysis, so that, in essence, discussion should lead to the creation of an original model of noncapitalist transformation for developing countries on the theoretical basis of Marxism-Leninism.

Is it possible without settling basic democratic and basic national issues—by far the most difficult problems of nation building—to rush to carry out the most profound social reforms for which objective conditions have not yet been created? A dogmatic approach to Marxism-Leninism and a command-administrative, bureaucratic model of socialism which came to be regarded as standard are the reason that leaders of several socialist countries have done exactly this. The strategy recommended in connection with this model is well known: the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat, the creation of a Marxist-Leninist party, state control [*ogosudarstvleniye*] of the means of production, industrialization, and the development of producer cooperatives. However, the inapplicability of such a strategy to the conditions of backward countries becomes continually more apparent as the development of the revolution proceeds: difficulties multiply rapidly; hurried changes lead to a socioeconomic crisis. Let us look at how all this occurred in the concrete example of Ethiopia.

* * *

The first developed programmatic document of the Provisional Military Administrative Committee (PMAC [or Derg])—the Declaration of 20 December 1974—defined the tasks of the antifeudal bourgeois-democratic revolution; it was filled with ideas of social justice and the creation of a modern, economically developed, unified state. Gradually a left

wing formed within the Derg, bringing together its most radically inclined activists. The views of the Derg members evolved, but the struggle among them did not stop; the correlation of forces inside the leadership changed to the advantage of revolutionary democrats, who advocated a noncapitalist path of development. The logic of the revolutionary struggle required the accomplishment of serious social measures. The advocates of radical socioeconomic and political changes won.

Any government coming to power in the country would have had to face the necessity of solving the agrarian problem. The Derg, proclaiming a far-reaching agrarian reform and declaring land "the collective property of the Ethiopian people,"³ counted not only on achieving an upsurge in agriculture, but also on turning the millions of peasants into supporters of the revolution, thus creating for itself the strongest social support. The agrarian reform weakened the counterrevolution insofar as it disrupted the pattern of feudal landholding—the base of economic power of the aristocracy. The property of the imperial family and high officials was nationalized [*bylo natsionalizirovano*]. The struggle against the bourgeoisie, which despite its weakness and lack of political organization was a basis of potential opposition, dictated the need to nationalize and to place all large and medium private enterprises under the control of the state. The ethnoreligious problems confronting the country were extremely complicated and aggravated. Separatist tendencies were widespread among the national minorities, and separatist fronts were active in several regions. This was related [first] to the fact that the process of state-political consolidation was incomplete and [second] to the policy of ethnoreligious discrimination against many ethnic groups which the imperial regime had followed. Exploiting revolutionary developments, separatist groups—both those which had been active before the revolution and those which formed after the revolution—stepped up their activity.

The social orientation of the Derg drove it to carry out deep social changes. The Derg offered as the ideological basis for its activity a program of Ethiopian socialism.

Thus, [the Derg] utilized the potential of ideas that already existed in the progressive sector of the intelligentsia. Without this contribution, the military would not have been able to create a revolutionary theory so rapidly.

In the early postrevolutionary years, the revolutionary ideology contained a certain "pluralism." This was the result of the rapid development of the revolution, which was continually shifting in relationship to class forces, of the complex and often highly dramatic

³*Basic Documents of the Ethiopian Revolution*, Addis Ababa, 1977, p. 20.

search for an ideological basis for changes, and of the incompletely formed official political platform. The proclamation of socialism as the guiding theory for the development of the country created favorable conditions for the study, distribution, and translation into local languages of Marxist-Leninist literature.

The revolution and the agrarian reform which it proclaimed activated the peasantry politically. Peasant associations were formed throughout the country. The social roots of the old social consciousness were ripped out, opening the way for further progressive ideological-political evolution. The distinguishing characteristic of this period of the revolution was the unity of broad strata of the population in the struggle against the feudal regime of Haile Selassie.

All this provided a basis for many—not only Soviet, but also foreign—researchers to evaluate events in Ethiopia not as an “ordinary” coup as had occurred in a majority of African countries, but as a revolution which opened up new perspectives for the country. Thus, as the well-known American Africanist political scientists C[olin] Legum and B[ill] Lee wrote: “The destruction of the feudal system opened the way for social development in one of the potentially richest countries of Africa.”⁴ “In spite of the leading role of the army in Ethiopian events,” the well-known Africanist M[arina] Ottaway stressed, “it would be a mistake to consider the changes in Ethiopia simply a coup as a result of which one authoritarian regime has replaced another.... The reforms have struck a mighty blow against the social base of the landowning class.”⁵

At the same time, many authors made critical judgments of the possibility of rapidly achieving genuine radical changes in Ethiopian agriculture.⁶ The eyewitness of revolutionary events, P[aul] Brietzke, quite explicitly characterized the agrarian reforms of the military government as an effort of the new regime to establish absolute political control of the peasantry. In our view, he correctly believed that to solve its agrarian problems, the country should develop small-scale farms [*khozyaistva fermerskovo tipa*].⁷

⁴C. Legum, B. Lee, *Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, New York, 1977, p. 19.

⁵M. Ottaway, “Social Classes and Corporate Interests in the Ethiopian Revolution,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* (London), Vol. 14, No. 3, 1976, pp. 469, 480.

⁶See, e.g., J. Markakis, *Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, London, 1974; P. Gilkes, *The Dying Lion*, London, 1975.

⁷P. Brietzke, “Land Reform in Revolutionary Ethiopia,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1976, p. 646; P. Brietzke, H. Scholler, *Ethiopia: Revolution, Law and Politics*, Munich, 1976, p. 8-81.

The belief that the liquidation of feudalism all by itself would lead to general prosperity weakened as the revolution developed. Confronting the actual contradictions of Ethiopian society and economic and social difficulties, the revolutionaries came to the conclusion that they needed a system of ideas already confirmed by historical practice, a theory on the basis of which the radical transformation of the country, the activation of the popular masses, and the creation of a broad social base for their power would be possible.

The nationalist ideology of "Ethiopian socialism" could not serve as a basis for the activity of the Derg because separatist influence caused many of the ethnic groups living in the country to regard Ethiopia as a colonial empire, the central government (in which the Amhara dominated) as a government of colonizers, and the military leadership as merely the continuators of Haile Selassie's policies on the nationality question. This made it possible for the Ethiopian revolutionary democrats in less than two years to evolve toward Marxism-Leninism and to announce that they were adopting the basic features of scientific socialism.

The Program of the National-Democratic Revolution was adopted 20 April 1976. This document consolidated the accomplishments of the revolution and at the same time outlined the prospects for its further development. The national democratic revolution was defined as a necessary stage in the transition to socialism, in the course of which fundamental problems of restructuring productive relationships, economic development, and raising the standard of living of the workers would have to be solved. Socialism was proclaimed the "guiding principle of ideology."⁸ The notion was advanced of creating a united front under the leadership of a vanguard working-class party—the leading forces of the national democratic revolution—based on the ideological foundations of scientific socialism. All this was to prepare the conditions for the creation of a popular democratic state. The program announced that all nationalities would have the right of self-determination within the framework of regional autonomy. Relying on Marxist-Leninist ideology, the military were hoping not only to overcome economic backwardness rapidly but to settle the acute social, ethnic, and religious problems that they had inherited from the feudal-monarchical regime, to consolidate the broad popular masses around themselves, and to strengthen central power.

⁸*Programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, 1976, p. 8.

The Derg leaders' acceptance of the notion that Marxism was the key to the rapid solution of the problems of the "Third World" contributed to the unequivocal acceptance of Marxist doctrine as official ideology and led to its dogmatization, to a social science monopoly, and to a firm rejection of any compromises, either in the field of ideology or the field of politics. In Marxist-Leninist doctrine the military found a ready-made basis for a theory of transforming the bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist one, [as well as] already developed concepts of class struggle, dictatorship of the proletariat, ways of solving the national question, etc. The propositions of Marxism-Leninism were laid out in popularized, oversimplified form. Many articles in the Ethiopian sociopolitical journal *Meskerem* consisted of quoted and expanded citations of V. I. Lenin with extremely schematic commentary or expositions of corresponding paragraphs of textbooks on historical materialism. Even in the 1980s, references to the works of I. V. Stalin and his *Kratkii kurs istorii VKP(b)* [Short Course on the History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)] were no rarity. Because of its apparent coherence and clarity and its assertions about the possibility of bypassing the capitalist stage—without any relationship to the level of general civilizational, economic, or cultural development of the country—the concept of socialist orientation attracted Derg leaders in the form in which it was treated in the works of Soviet social scientists; the conclusions and judgments drawn from it are likewise—in simplified form—expounded in Ethiopian literature.

We must also remember that the development of friendly relations with the USSR prompted the Ethiopian leaders not only to accept the idea of scientific socialism, but also to attempt to reproduce our path without reckoning with all its costs. In the model of socialism that basically took shape in our country in the 1930s, the force of centralization, the administrative-command method of management, the authoritativeness of control, and the absence of opposition and of alternative ideological currents impressed the [Ethiopian] revolutionary democrats, who were often out of touch with life but who were working for the domestic consolidation of a slogan.

The Ethiopian leadership gave great attention to questions of power, party formation, and increasing the role of the state in the life of society. Attempting to broaden its support in the country, the Derg applied all efforts to the creation of a vanguard party the theoretical basis of which would have to become scientific socialism. Maintaining that Ethiopia had the historical conditions for the rise of a proletarian party—[namely,] the spread of scientific socialism and the existence of workers' and socialist movements—Ethiopian leaders in February 1977 proposed the organization of a party uniting five groups, the formation of the

Union of Marxist-Leninist Organizations of Ethiopia, the adoption of the program of the national democratic revolution, and the support of the Derg. However, this party, as M. and D. Ottaway not without justification have noted, did not so much constitute an independent political force as "a veritable battleground for contending civilian and military factions."⁹

Recognizing at the beginning of 1979 that the approach to creating a party "by uniting different groups did not correspond to the objective reality of Ethiopia and had proved destructive,"¹⁰ the revolutionaries found their own original path to the creation of a party. In December 1979, by decree of the Derg, the Commission for Organizing the Party of Workers of Ethiopia (COPWE) was formed; it became an original school in which its members obtained experience in party work, increased their theoretical preparation and themselves propagandized the ideas of Marxism-Leninism. COPWE committees were formed at various administrative levels, after which primary organizations were set up in enterprises and associations, etc. The activity of the commission, which at first consisted of a small group of revolutionaries¹¹ who were most experienced in theoretical and political relations and which in reality filled the role of a ruling party, prepared the ground for the formation of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE).

In so naming their party, the Ethiopian revolutionaries believed that its base would consist of industrial workers. They could not avoid realizing, of course, that the industrial proletariat in the country at the founding congress of the WPE totaled in all 105,000 people¹² and that it was extremely weakly organized. But in their arrangements they relied on judgments disseminated in Soviet literature about the contemporary proletariat in developing countries and its characteristics and possibilities. The following excerpt from *Meskerem*, for example, shows how these judgments were reflected in Ethiopia: "Obviously, the proletariat, oppressed and exploited by imperialist monopolies and local exploiters, advocates radical reforms. Despite its small numbers, it made an enormous contribution to the anticolonial and anti-imperialist struggle.... In particular, in the new epoch of revolutionary change brought about by the Great October Socialist Revolution, the proletariat even in its embryonic condition can play a far-reaching revolutionary role."¹³ Such views prevailed in the absence in the country of any scientific studies of the structure

⁹M. and D. Ottaway, *Ethiopia. Empire in Revolution*, New York, 1978, p. 187.

¹⁰*Meskerem*, Addis Ababa, September 1980, Inaugural Special Issue, p. 11.

¹¹According to data in the foreign press, 79 of the 93 original members of COPWE were military (*The Economist*, November 28, 1981, p. 48).

¹²*Sovremennaya Efiopiya. Spravochnik*, p. 145.

¹³*Meskerem*, Vol. 3, June 1983, p. 26.

of a national proletariat (this process is far from complete), the degree of its maturity, or the level of class consciousness. Assertions about the leading role of the Ethiopian working class in the revolutionary struggle remained purely speculative.

The leadership of revolutionary Ethiopia immediately faced the necessity of solving the extraordinarily complex, tangled, and acute nationality question, which became more aggravated after the revolution. Here the revolutionary democrats tried to turn to Soviet experience in solving nationality problems. In this effort, they were attracted above all to the ideas of the equality and friendship of peoples and raising the economic level of backward countries. They proclaimed the equality of all ethnic and religious groups and their right to self-determination within the framework of regional autonomy in a single democratic state. Emphasizing the interconnection between social and nationality problems, the leaders of the revolution demonstrated that a definitive solution of the nationality question was possible only under a condition of successful construction of a socialist society in the country. At that time, and even up to the present, the presence of separatism is often explained away in party documents and declarations of the leaders as the subversive activity of foreign forces.

After the conflict with Somalia (1977-1978), the attainment of temporary stabilization of the situation in the Eritrean theater of military operations, and the defeat of the counterrevolution, economic problems were given first priority. The Ethiopian revolutionary democrats believed that in the process of economic construction "there are no alternatives to the development of heavy industry and agriculture"¹⁴ and that specifically this development should become the basic feature of the period of transition to socialism. The proposed creation of heavy industrial enterprises, in their opinion, would bring about the growth in numbers and coherence of the proletariat, while "the dependence of agriculture on industry reflects the interconnection between the working class and the peasants and emphasis on the development of industry underscores the vanguard role of the working class in the revolution."¹⁵ Specific hopes rested on the assistance of the socialist countries. One document, in particular, notes: "The rates of rapid social reform of society are being further accelerated, thanks to the international aid of the proletariat, as the accomplishments of Cuba, North Korea and Albania testify."¹⁶

¹⁴Mengistu Haile Mariam, *Towards Economic and Cultural Development in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, 1979, p. 10.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Tasks, Achievements, Problems and Prospects of the Ethiopian Revolution*, Addis Ababa, 1977, p. 34.

At the end of 1978 the Derg published a decree on the creation of the National Revolutionary Development Campaign and Central Planning Supreme Council. This body was called upon to work out and put into operation a plan for expanding the national economy on the basis of democratic centralism. The basic aims of the campaign were an increase in the output of agricultural produce and the development of transport, trade, etc. However, concrete plans and measures were not worked out, and many of the propositions of the decree had [only] a declarative character. Only in 1982 was a preliminary project approved for a prospective plan for economic and social development of the country during the period 1984-1993. Emphasis shifted still more to the field of agriculture; the task of creating heavy industry was seen as only for the long term because there were simply no resources to try to solve it in the short term. However, not even this document assured the material possibilities for realization of the programs outlined in it.

The basic completion in 1978 of the formation of peasant associations, which united about 5 million farms, and the partial organization of supply/sales cooperatives provided a basis for the Derg leadership to conclude that the peasantry was ready for cooperative production [*proizvodstvennaya kooperatsiya*]. On 3 March 1978, a decree was published "on assistance in creating cooperatives," according to which cooperative production was regarded as "the necessary and most important task of the revolution"; on 23 June 1979 the directives of the Derg on organization of producer cooperatives [*proizvodstvennye kooperativy*] were published. According to these documents, the aims of cooperative agriculture [*kooperatsiya*] were the liquidation of all forms of capitalist exploitation and prevention of the restoration of capitalist relationships in the countryside, the liquidation of poverty and ignorance among the peasants, the conversion of peasant labor into a variety of industrial [labor], the strengthening of links between the city and the countryside, and the planned management of agriculture. The establishment of collectives was to be carried out "under the leadership of the poorest peasants in conjunction with the middle [peasantry]."¹⁷

However, the realization of this plan was delayed for a number of reasons. The experience of organizing the structure of collective farms [*opyta organizatsionnoy stroitel'stva kolkhozov*] in the USSR undoubtedly influenced the theory and practice of organizing producer cooperatives [*proizvodstvennoye kooperirovaniye*].¹⁸ Dogmatic recommendations contained in many research studies and documents of the 1970s, when any

¹⁷*Regulation on Peasant Producer Cooperatives*, Addis Ababa, 1979 (in Amharic).

¹⁸G. L. Gal'perin, *Efiopiya: revolyutsiya i derevnya* (Ethiopia, the Revolution and the Countryside), Moscow, 1985, p. 125.

forms of socialization in agriculture, no matter what their economic appropriateness, were being equated with socialist transformations and regarded as historically progressive, were uncritically accepted. And this justified, in the opinion of those implementing the changes, widespread coercion of the peasants in the process of establishing consolidated farms. Obviously, the experience of similar transformations in several other African countries was insufficiently analyzed. All this demonstrated the superficiality of the approach to the specific situation in Ethiopia and shallow comprehension of the real situation. Not only the degree of readiness of the peasants for cooperative production, but the ability of the state to materially support cooperative production was obviously exaggerated. The peasants preferred their own traditional methods of farming and were skeptical about collective forms of labor. The announced principle of voluntary entry into a cooperative was negated by the regulation [stating] that in case of leaving or being expelled from a cooperative, land, agricultural implements, and entry fees would not be returned to the peasant, while compensation would be paid only if it suited the needs of the cooperative. The process of collectivization was delayed by the scarcity of material and financial resources, the lack of agricultural equipment, consumer goods, etc.

Objectively, the socialization of peasant farms, the transition from small-scale market farming to large-scale socialization, which the Derg envisioned as a means of liquidating the backwardness of the countryside, was hardly possible in Ethiopia on the basis of economic principles. (Ethiopian peasants still have to be "raised" to that level—agriculture in the country is carried out by traditional methods, utilizing primitive implements, the produce of peasant farms is ordinarily consumed on the farm and enters the market irregularly and in very limited quantity.)

The nationalization of industrial enterprises, the attempt to socialize peasant farms and organize producer cooperatives in the absence of material and other prerequisites for them, the administration [*administrirovanie*] of the countryside and unrealistic programs on the one hand and the damage as a result of military operations against Somalia and against separatist fronts on the other hand—[all] led to the stagnation of the national economy. Though this made possible more realistic appraisals of the prospects for development of the country and realization that "the very existence and development of the revolution will depend on how the material and psychological needs of the workers are satisfied,"¹⁹ the resolution of everyday problems was underestimated. Emphases in programmatic

¹⁹*Declaration of the II Congress of COPWE* (January 6, 1983), Addis Ababa, 1983 (in Amharic).

documents and propaganda, as before, stressed the superiority of socialism over capitalism, understood literally and in extremely simplified form.

At the founding congress of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE) in 1984, the creation of a vanguard party was proclaimed and its program and charter were approved. The building of socialism, and afterwards communism, was announced as the strategic goal of the WPE. The party was characterized as the organizer and political leader of this process and its ideological basis was declared to be Marxism-Leninism. Its program confirmed the course of priority development of cooperatives and of the state sector in industry (thus, by 1994 about 53 percent of the rural population was to be organized in producer cooperatives) and set the goal of prospective withdrawal from the world capitalist market system and the creation of an economy "based on the mutual interdependence of its component sectors." The first-priority task of the revolution was proclaimed to be the creation of a people's democratic republic, the foundation of which would consist of a union of workers and peasants, in cooperation with the intelligentsia, the army, craftsmen, and civil servants who support the goals of the revolution. The attainment of this union, according to the authors of this document, would open up the possibility of transition to the dictatorship of the proletariat.²⁰

The congress also adopted the Basic Directives for the Socio-economic Development of Ethiopia (1984/85-1993/94), in accordance with which [the congress] worked out and confirmed the 10-year development plan, which discusses the gradual elimination of small-scale production and expansion of the position of state and collective property. It proposes that 44.5 percent of the necessary investments be obtained from abroad in the form of loans, credits, and grant aid,²¹ which makes fulfillment of the plan closely dependent on the possibility of attracting and utilizing external resources.

In September 1987, at the founding session of the National Assembly, the formation of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was proclaimed and a constitution adopted. In keeping with the constitution, the conception of regional autonomy was detailed and effectuated: Five autonomous provinces were created, the elected assemblies of which were to implement local self-government. A territorial-administrative reorganization has been carried out; instead of the present 14 provinces, 30 have been formed. However, ignoring

²⁰*Programma RPE. Uchreditel'nyy s"yezd RPE (Addis-Abeba, 6-10.IX.1984)* (Program of the WPE. Founding Congress of the WPE, Addis Ababa, September 6-10, 1984), Moscow, 1987.

²¹*Sovremennaya Efiopiya. Spravochnik*, p. 212.

the nationality factor in carrying out the reforms has led to a situation where the ethnic groups inhabiting the country have become even more divided by the new administrative boundaries, and this will hardly help to solve the nationality problem. Obviously, the president possesses the same strong prerogatives which the chairman of the Derg previously exercised, and his actual power rests not so much on written law, which according to Ethiopian tradition is honored and praised but often evaded with remarkable ease, as on accumulated political practice.

In spite of accomplishments postulated in party documents, the Ethiopian leadership still has not succeeded even in approaching a solution of the problems of economic development, national integration, raising the living standards of the masses, and their genuine inclusion in the political process. The socialization of the means of production has actually resulted in declaring the land "collective property" and the nationalization of industry. The country is undergoing an economic crisis. Hurried and largely formal cooperative production, unreinforced by corresponding material conditions, the forced resettlement of the peasants in the enlarged settlements which have been established, and reliance on political and administrative actions rather than on economic production incentives and material self-interest have led to the disruption of normal farming activity of millions of peasants and to the constant threat of famine.

With such meager means as the Ethiopian state has at its disposal, it is hardly possible in a few years to carry out a revolution in the peasants' style of life, in forms of farming, and in the methods of working the soil that had developed over the centuries.

It stands to reason that a decline in production at a time of radical reforms affecting the relationships of property to the means of production is to some extent natural. It is also necessary to take into account the extremely unfavorable ecological situation and the fact that the territory of many provinces has become a theater of continuing military operations. Undoubtedly, however, the crisis of the agricultural economy is, in the final analysis, the result of the authorities' methods of economic operation.

The state sector of industry is also unprofitable. For a variety of reasons, high-prestige projects, such as the tractor assembly plant in Nazareth and the hydroelectric station in Melka Wakena, are not having the expected economic effect. When concrete economic tasks are set, the material capabilities of the state and the lack of resources and reserves are often ignored. When a strategy of economic development is determined, noneconomic administrative methods, rather than broad use of methods of commercial-monetary and financial control, are relied on.

Economic and social crisis, the danger that millions of people will perish from hunger, the formation of a political system in which the population is in practice removed from the adoption of decisions, and the prolonged unsuccessful war against separatism create the ground for the opposition activity. And the successes or failures of government policy, especially in the field of agriculture, have an immediate effect on [the opposition's] activity. Thus, in 1978, on a wave of mass enthusiasm and support for Derg policy, the country succeeded not only in making progress in the war against Somalia, but also in smashing the forces of counterrevolution, primarily because the destruction of the feudal system, the provision of land to the peasants, and the hopes for social justice, development, and progress were [all] linked to the military leadership. However, the separatists' rejection of the government's concept of regional autonomy, the Derg's refusal to seek other political solutions and its insistence on suppressing the separatists by military force led to a protracted war of attrition which became an unbearable burden for the economy, not to speak of the substantial human sacrifices and the disrupted economy in the provinces where military operations were being conducted. According to some data, more than 50 percent of the state budget goes for military purposes.²² What kind of economy could support such enormous expenditures over an extended period?

The above-noted circumstances in conjunction with the unfavorable results of the economic performance of the revolutionary regime have led to the contraction of its social base and, conversely, to the broadening of the base of separatist organizations, as well as to the rise of opposition forces who declare that they represent common national interests. Such organizations as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and the United Democratic Front of Ethiopia (UDFE) are active in several provinces with a predominantly Amharic population under the slogan of unification of all the peoples of the country for the purpose of overthrowing the regime. The proclamation of the Ethiopian government in May 1988, i.e., in the fourteenth year of the revolution, of general mobilization in the absence of aggression from abroad testifies to the serious crisis which the country is experiencing and to the fact that the revolutionary leadership has not succeeded in solving its first-priority problems, including those connected with building a nation-state.

It appears that Ethiopian society is approaching the kind of situation about which the classics of scientific socialism have spoken: ["]The next day, the revolutionaries wake up to the fact that the revolution that they carried out in no way resembles the one that they

²²I. Smolowe, R. Wilkinson, "Ethiopia, A New Communist State," *Newsweek*, No. 39, 1984, p. 23.

wanted to carry out."²³ They have a choice—either to follow their declared course, relying on force, or to recognize the contradictions that have arisen and to correct this course.

However, under the former choice, which does not ensure successful development of the economy, the kind of "social need" can develop which all attempts to suppress forcibly "only compels [the revolution] to strike with increasing force."²⁴

Of course, convinced of their political correctness and trying to retain power for themselves, the Ethiopian revolutionaries have great possibilities for asserting their will, though this too entails significant human sacrifices. But it appears that life itself is forcing them to reject stereotypes of administrative thinking and to review dogmatic notions of socialism, in particular, political means of deciding the nationality question. The political situation cannot develop successfully in isolation from the economic situation. Recognition of the fact that it is impossible to attain the goals of socioeconomic development by applying the old conceptual approach, that the solution of many problems, including the nationality issue, lies in the internal development of the country's economy, in a genuine rise in the welfare of the people, is an extremely difficult and very painful process. But correcting the socioeconomic and ideological-political development of the state from above (and possibly also from below) is unavoidable. There is already some evidence of it: limited agricultural reforms to increase food production, the measures to stimulate trade announced in December 1987, and the interest shown in reforms in the Chinese People's Republic when Mengistu Haile Mariam visited that country in June 1988.

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The experience of Ethiopia, as we see it, demonstrates the need to overcome an abstract, one-sided philosophical and politico-economic model of the social process, to adapt it to the conditions of a particular country, and to take into account the genuine contradictions and irregularities in the development of the society and the entire complexity of socio-cultural phenomena, including ethnic peculiarities and religious-cultural traditions. How might priorities have been set for the realization of revolutionary transformations in Ethiopia, had the concrete circumstances of this country been fully considered, i.e., if a model of development and movement to socialism had been worked out not as a reflection of a Soviet command-administrative model but as a model, one might say, with Ethiopian

²³K. Marx and F. Engels, *Sochineniya*, Vol. 36, p. 263.

²⁴K. Marx and F. Engels, *Sochineniya*, Vol. 8, p. 6.

specificity, taking into account the political realities of the society, the low level of the development of the economy, and the complicated tangle of ethnonationality problems? One cannot but recall in this connection that the Chinese communists, in carrying out the reforms directed at the liquidation of bureaucratic state socialism—reforms that are attracting enormous interest—call the kind of society they are building “socialism with a specifically Chinese character.”

One would think that, in such a case, basic reliance over a long period would be on implementing common national and common democratic reforms. In the first place, this means the solution of questions of ethnonational relations, because without the liquidation of ethnic conflicts the forward movement of the country along the path of progressive reforms is extremely difficult. In the second place, it is a question of the democratization of society, reinforcing democratic principles in social life, a process that is doubtless very complex, contradictory, and protracted. But without the broad development [of this process], the construction of socialism is not possible even in the long term, or else it will inevitably be implemented in extremely distorted forms. Such, it must be admitted, has been the experience of socialist construction in the USSR, which occurred in particular historical circumstances on the basis of oversimplified and at times mistaken theoretical propositions and which led to the establishment of a regime of authoritarian power, to excessive state control of social life, and to consolidation of command-bureaucratic methods of leadership.

Third, the democratization of social life cannot successfully proceed without the democratization of social consciousness. Hence, the importance of a course calculated to steadily raise the political awareness of the masses by drawing them on a broad basis into the activity of social change [*obshchestvenno-preobrazuyushchaya deyatel'nost'*]. Neither decrees, decisions, and directives, nor an extensive network of party-political indoctrination can replace the direct participation of the people in the creation of a new society.

Both the creation of a political party as the vanguard of society and the formation of its ideology, as well as the establishment of a new party-political system as a whole, cannot proceed in isolation from the processes of economic and social development of a country; on the contrary, they are in the closest way linked to the economic successes and accomplishments in establishing a new social and class structure of society and with the level of development of mass consciousness. As the experience of several other African countries demonstrates, Angola and Mozambique among them, a rupture between the political vanguard and the masses threatens the direst consequences for the revolution. The term “workers” [*rabochaya*] without a fully formed working class can indicate only the

intentions of the party to operate in the interests of the proletariat and to become its party in some distant future. A disruption of the synchronization of these processes leads to a situation in which the party lives one life and the people another.

It must be noted that the Soviet model of building socialism cannot be acknowledged as "standard" [*etalonny*] not only because it took shape, as is known, in the framework of the antisocialist and criminal activities of I. V. Stalin, who violated the laws of economic development [*praktikovavshii nasilie nad zakonami ekonomicheskovo razvitiya*], [but because] it did enormous damage to society and involved irreplaceable human sacrifices. There were also objective reasons for the rise of this model. To a great extent it was the product of extraordinary circumstances: capitalist encirclement, the danger of external aggression, and the necessity of forced development of heavy industry in order to create a strong military potential. Furthermore, one must realize that our country had enormous human resources and unique natural wealth.

In conditions of backward African countries, the Soviet experience in industrialization should have been applied with great caution, whether it is forced or whether it stresses the creation of heavy industry. Of course, at the time it occurred, many Soviet political officials and academics not only did not object but encouraged "grandiose plans" in connection with the industrialization of, for example, Ghana under K. Nkrumah and several other countries.

Likewise, our experience with collectivization of agriculture as a result of which the peasantry was ruined and the food problem was sharply exacerbated—millions of people died of hunger and our country was transformed from an exporter into a major importer of food—is in no way appropriate in conditions of African countries (and it has nothing to do with social progress in general).

It appears that in such countries as Ethiopia there is no way to avoid a protracted stage of all-out development of state-controlled and state-regulated trade and monetary relationships and, consequently, the coexistence of anticapitalist and capitalist tendencies. Any attempts to block private entrepreneurial activity [*chastnopredprinimatel' skaya deyatel' nost'*] as such will not succeed because at the same time [such attempts] would also block the development of productive forces and lead to the stagnation of society. The way to deal with the problem is to permit capitalism to develop to a certain stage but not permit it to become a framework that determines the nature of the system [*sistemoobrazuyushchii ukklad*]. At the same time, apparently, the broad development of the simplest kinds of cooperation and mixed forms of property are needed because, as the experience of

practically all African countries demonstrates, enterprises in the state sector more often than not operate unprofitably.

Thus, countries of socialist orientation need their own strategy of transformation of both the base and the superstructure (it can be neither the reflection of a foreign development model nor the result of mechanical adoption of one or another Marxist-Leninist formula), a strategy worked out and realized on the basis of the profound assimilation and the creative refining of the most important propositions of universal Marxist-Leninist doctrine and taking into account the reality of the "Third World."